



Reading the Landscapes
at Write On, Door County

November 2020
Landscapes of Place
Nancy Aten & Dan Collins



Welcome to Write On, Door County

These lands that surround Write On were once forest, then logged, farmed, pastured, and now are a classic Door County old-field on a slow, multi-patterned journey back to forest.

This guidebook is meant to introduce you to the story of these wild landscapes, and to an approach to help the Writing Center gracefully emerge from and connect to its natural setting.

The visitor or writer is welcomed with nearly transparent beginnings of trails and spaces that unfold from the Center. After that comes possibilities for individual discovery and revelation. Layers of history – successional change, emergence, decay, bustle and nibble – show themselves to anyone observant, whether moving or sitting still. Half-hidden details are open to interpretation – unexplained artifacts, unexpected sightings, partial glimpses, light and shadow around bends.

The process of integrating the Center with the land is a journey of ecological restoration, too. Getting to know the way nature works – and the way we all work to assist in healing the land – is a nurturing framework. We are all glad stewards in the next chapter of the well-being of this place.

The landscapes at Write On can be thought of in five parts. Near the Center, introductions take place. Plant friends appear in drifts, beckoning the explorer to what will be found in the other four parts: the meadow, the successional old-field, the new woods, and the hardwood forest.

The path awaits.



A Door County Meadow

Door County does not have fire-dependent ecosystems, so true prairies do not develop. Our meadows are openings, created naturally by windfall, tree fall, exposed bedrock or happenstance of topography, or unnaturally because of past land use history, including timber cutting and agriculture.

These openings are the beginnings of a patterned successional process. Quintessential at Write On are bracken fern, yellow coreopsis and the petite pussy-toes, along with a joyous complement of familiar plant friends like several species of white, blue, lavender and violet asters; brown-eyed Susans and thimbleweed; grasses and sedges. In places, there is a surprising amount of starry false Solomon's seal, with strawberries, bee balm and milkweed.



When old-field junipers begin to arrive, a story is being written again in a familiar Door County pattern ...



Old-Field on a 100-Year Meander to Becoming Forest

The path through the old-field is evident. Landscape architects use the term “legibility” to describe the degree of intuitive comfort one has in finding one’s way in the landscape. Despite the complexity in an old-field, the patterning and familiarity of junipers leads the way forward. That sea of old-field junipers is an ecological facilitator, giving safe harbor to young upstart conifers and pioneer hardwoods, protecting them from nibbling mammals and too much drying sun. In Door County it can take one hundred years to transition from field to young forest. A perceptive eye can still find remnant old-field junipers in the forest, relics of past transitions.

Little bluestem grass glows in the sunnier openings. Underfoot is the wiry-bladed sedge *Carex eburnea* and the friendly path rush. White pine, cedar, aspens, and black cherry emerge from the junipers, drawing the eye upward. These are the early beginnings of the new forest.





A New Woods Nipping at the Edges

In the old-field, wildflowers and grasses – yellow-hooked dyer’s-weed, purple New England aster, needle grass, little bluestem – soak up sun in all the places they can. But the aspens and cherries have another plan. The earliest ones spring up through the junipers and make the first shade. While the aspens, birches, cherries and pines are growing (quickly! like early-successional trees do), some plants thrive in the transitional conditions, in the partial light. These include Pennsylvania sedge, zig-zag goldenrod and the eye-catching columbine. As the decaying leaves of the trees increase the soil’s organic layer, long-dormant seeds might germinate, recognizing that now is their time.



The aspen clones serve as guideposts, bringing coherence to the developing landscape that is still working out the details.



Hardwood Forest: Canopy and Understory

The old forest canopy is dominated by beech, sugar maple, birch and oak, which consume and filter the light. Some trees with wide-spread branches arrived early to this forested spot and stayed. Others grew once the shade had developed.

Understory trees and shrubs like ironwood, chokecherry and leatherwood (slow-growing and a symbol of forest health) have evolved to optimize the scant light available below the canopy.

Forest forbs (flowering plants) and grasses worked out an arrangement long ago. Spring ephemerals – like trillium, wild leek, bellwort – emerge, flower, set seed and store their energy for the next year in thick roots before the overstory trees leaf out. All of this happens in an urgent explosion of growth and color during April and May. In summer, the species that can economize on light will catch your eye, like baneberry and sarsaparilla.



Hint of Orchard

<i>Prunus serotina</i>	Black Cherry
<i>Prunus americana</i>	Wild Plum

Foreword to the Woods

<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	White Cedar
<i>Tsuga canadensis</i>	Hemlock
<i>Abies balsamea</i>	Balsam Fir
<i>Acer saccharum</i>	Sugar Maple
<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red Maple
<i>Betula papyrifera</i>	Paper Birch
<i>Cornus alternifolia</i>	Pagoda Dogwood
<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	Musclewood
<i>Prunus virginiana</i>	Chokecherry
<i>Rhus aromatica</i>	Fragrant Sumac

Cue New Forest Edge

<i>Populus tremuloides</i>	Quaking Aspen
<i>Rhus typhina</i>	Staghorn Sumac
<i>Pinus strobus</i>	White Pine

Fancy on Arrival

<i>Amelanchier x grandiflora</i>	Juneberry
<i>Rosa carolina</i>	Pasture Rose
<i>Spiraea alba</i>	Meadowsweet



Sunny Meadows

<i>Anemone cylindrica</i>	Thimbleweed
<i>Anemone virginiana</i>	Tall Thimbleweed
<i>Anthoxanthum hirtum</i>	Sweet Grass
<i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>	Wild Columbine
<i>Asclepias syriaca</i>	Common Milkweed
<i>Asclepias verticillata</i>	Whorled Milkweed
<i>Bromus kalmii</i>	Kalm's Brome
<i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i>	Coreopsis
<i>Danthonia spicata</i>	Poverty Oat Grass
<i>Fragaria virginiana</i>	Wild Strawberry
<i>Juncus tenuis</i>	Path Rush
<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>	Junegrass
<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	Bee Balm
<i>Pedicularis canadensis</i>	Wood Betony
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken Fern
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Black-eyed Susan
<i>Rudbeckia triloba</i>	Brown-eyed Susan
<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	Little Bluestem
<i>Solidago juncea</i>	Early Goldenrod
<i>Solidago nemoralis</i>	Dyer's-weed Goldenrod
<i>Solidago rigida</i>	Stiff Goldenrod
<i>Stipa spartea</i>	Porcupine Grass
<i>Symphyotrichum ciliolatus</i>	Heart-leaved Aster
<i>Symphyotrichum laeve</i>	Smooth Blue Aster
<i>Symphyo. oolentangiensis</i>	Sky-blue Aster

Shady Respite

<i>Anemone virginiana</i>	Thimbleweed
<i>Carex blanda</i>	Wood Sedge
<i>Carex gracillima</i>	Graceful Sedge
<i>Carex pensylvanica</i>	Pennsylvania Sedge
<i>Carex plantaginea</i>	Plantain-leaved Sedge
<i>Carex radiata</i>	Eastern Star Sedge
<i>Carex rosea</i>	Rosy Sedge
<i>Dryopteris intermedia</i>	Intermed. Wood Fern
<i>Eurybia macrophylla</i>	Largeleaf Aster
<i>Mainthemum racemosum</i>	Solomon's Plume
<i>Matteucia struthiopteris</i>	Ostrich Fern



Re-planting at the Writing Center

To help visitors and writers meet this wild place, the re-planted landscapes around the Center are arranged to tell stories.

At left: one of the plants used in restoration around the Center.

Sunny meadows were planted with drifts to create pattern and movement, emphasizing little bluestem grass, yellow coreopsis, bracken fern, brown-eyed Susan, bee balm. Most of the meadows were seeded and will take three or more years to establish. Over time, patterns will adjust to perfect their natural affiliations.

North of the building a shady respite allows details of small plants, many of them sedges, to delight the eye. Shade from the Center acts as a substitute for the shade of a large maple tree.

Near the road, a hint of orchard alludes to past homesteaders. A sweep of shrubs – fragrant sumac, chokecherry and meadowsweet – provides lovely color and structure year-round.

A bit of fanciness on arrival is offered by junberry trees, our first species to bloom in spring before the leaves open, along with the pasture rose. These echo their appearance in the wild landscapes as occasional surprises.

The young woods on the west are introduced with aspens and staghorn sumacs closer to the Center. The sugar maples, birches, firs, cedars, and hemlocks emerging from the old-field in front of the Center hint at the hardwood forest to the east. And sometimes trees touch, just like in a mature forest.

A Guide to Plants at Write On, Door County

The following pages introduce you to some of the plant friends you may encounter, welcoming your arrival and greeting you along your walk. They are arranged, here, from sunny meadow to forested habitats.



Strawberry
Fragaria virginiana

“When we look about us, we see the berries are still here, providing us with delicious foods. The leader of the berries is the strawberry, the first to ripen in the spring. Can we agree that we are grateful that the berries are with us in the world and send our thanksgiving, love, and respect to the berries? Now our minds are one.”
(Robin Wall Kimmerer, from *Allegiance to Gratitude*)



Path Rush
Juncus tenuis

Found on almost every trail

IllinoisWildflowers.info



Common Milkweed
Asclepias syriaca

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs, text and artwork: © Landscapes of Place

Thi bleweed
Anemone cylindrica
Tall Thi bleweed
Anemone virginiana



Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Lance-leaved Coreopsis
Coreopsis lanceolata



Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Bee Balm
Monarda fistulosa





Whorled Milkweed
Asclepias verticillata



Black-eyed Susan
Rudbeckia hirta



Branched Coneflower
Rudbeckia triloba

A favored late-fall bloom

Little Bluestem

Schizachyrium scoparium

There are two types of people in the world: those that love little bluestem and those that don't yet know little bluestem.

The leaf blades form flat-stemmed clusters of purple, pink and peach known for catching afternoon light. Seeds have glistening white hairs.



Bracken Fern

Pteridium aquilinum

Forms colonies mostly from rhizomes. The same ancient species is known worldwide. It is said to have “walked around the world.”



Wood Betony

Pedicularis canadensis

Emerging spring leaves are magenta!





IllinoisWildfl wers.info

Pussy Toes
Antennaria neglecta



IllinoisWildfl wers.info

Smooth Blue Aster
Symphyotrichum laeve



New England Aster
Symphyotrichum novae-angliae

Starry False Solomon's Seal
Maianthemum stellatum

In Door County meadows, this plant tends to angle its leaves vertically to reduce evapotranspiration. When it grows in shadier areas, its leaves will reach out sideways.



Curly-styled Wood Sedge
Carex rosea



pheasantbranch.org,
Flora of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy

Wild Columbine
Aquilegia canadensis





Bristle-leaf Sedge
Carex eburnea



Common Wood Sedge
Carex blanda

pheasantbranch.org,
Flora of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy

Online Virtual Flora of Wisconsin. 2020.
<http://wisfl.ra.herbarium.wisc.edu>



Northern Heart-leaved Aster
Symphyotrichum ciliolatum

Dyer's-weed Goldenrod
Solidago nemoralis



IllinoisWildfl wers.info

Needle Grass
Hesperostipa spartea



Lady Bird Johnson Wildfl wer Center

IllinoisWildfl wers.info

Daisy Fleabane
Erigeron strigosus





Pasture Rose
Rosa carolina



Fragrant Sumac
Rhus aromatica

New York Flora Atlas

New York Flora Atlas



Wild Plum
Prunus americana

Juneberry, Serviceberry
Amelanchier laevis

The berries taste great but you have to get them before the birds!



Pagoda Dogwood
Cornus alternifolia

A Pagoda Dogwood welcomes visitors at the front entrance to the Writing Center.



Forestryimages.org - Image Number 5473422
Rob Routledge, Sault College

[Wikimedia Commons](#)

Chokecherry
Prunus virginiana





Old-fi ld Juniper
Juniperus communis

“*Juniperus* comes from the Latin meaning ‘forever young’ ... The Common [Old-fi ld] Juniper is the source of the berries (technically the cones) that are used to give gin its distinctive flavor.” (Roy Lukes)

Online Virtual Flora of Wisconsin. 2020.
<http://wisflora.herbarium.wisc.edu>



Buff loberry
Shepherdia canadensis

New York Flora Atlas



Staghorn Sumac
Rhus typhina

Icon of the edges

American White Cedar
Thuja occidentalis

“In a shaded and more agreeable situation, their boughs are multi-twiggged ... on branches which are spread in feathery, horizontal fans. But in [an] exposed situation the twigs, as if in self defense, have turned at right angles to the sun so that they are all presented edge-on rather than surface-on. They are arranged like slats in a Venetian blind, and for the same purpose ...”
(Virginia Eifert, *Journeys in Green Places*)



Online Virtual Flora of Wisconsin. 2020.
<http://wisflora.herbarium.wisc.edu>

White Pine
Pinus strobus

Five letters in w-h-i-t-e,
five needles in a cluster
makes this an easy identification.



Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Virginia Creeper
Parthenocissus quinquefolia

Offers glorious red colors in fall





Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Toothwort
Cardamine concatenata



Bellwort
Uvularia grandiflora



Trillium
Trillium grandiflorum

Iconic spring ephemeral and possibly the first 'latin' plant name you learned

Wood Violet
Viola sororia



Downy Yellow Violet
Viola pubescens



Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Early Meadow Rue
Thalictrum dioicum

Filaments dangle like fringe



Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center



False Solomon's Seal
Maianthemum racemosum



Pennsylvania Sedge
Carex pensylvanica



Wild Sarsaparilla
Aralia nudicaulis

White Baneberry, Doll's-eyes
Actaea pachypoda



Red Baneberry
Actaea rubra



Large-leaved Aster
Aster macrophyllus





Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Ziz-zag Goldenrod
Solidago fl xicaulis

A woodland goldenrod with
a stem that goes zig-zag



Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Wild Leek, Ramp
Allium tricoccum



Wood Anemone
Anemone quinquefolia

Quaking Aspen
Populus tremuloides

“The slim trees were like golden plumes whose disk leaves shook incessantly in the wind and splashed a dazzling yellow against an October sky.” (Virginia Eifert, *Journeys in Green Places*)



Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Big-tooth Aspen
Populus grandidentata



Online Virtual Flora of Wisconsin. 2020.
<http://wisflora.herbarium.wisc.edu>

Black Cherry
Prunus serotina



Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center



Nannyberry
Viburnum lentago

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center



Paper Birch
Betula papyrifera

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Online Virtual Flora of Wisconsin, 2020.
<http://wisflora.herbarium.wisc.edu>



Balsam Fir
Abies balsamea

Sugar Maple

Acer saccharum

“Standing around us we see all the Trees. The Earth has many families of Trees who each have their own instructions and uses. Some provide shelter and shade, others fruit and beauty and many useful gifts. The Maple is the leader of the trees, to recognize its gifts of sugar when the People need it most. Many peoples of the world recognize a Tree as a symbol of peace and strength. With one mind we greet and thank the Tree life. Now our minds are one.”
(Robin Wall Kimmerer, from *Allegiance to Gratitude*)



Missouri Botanical Garden

Red Maple

Acer rubrum

Toothed leaf margins distinguish this readily from Sugar Maple



New York Flora Atlas

Leatherwood

Dirca palustris

An uncommon treat, with leathery twigs and beautiful May flowers





New York Flora Atlas

Red Oak
Quercus rubra

Really, it's an acorn tree.



Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Eastern Hemlock
Tsuga canadensis

Missouri Botanical Garden



American Beech
Fagus grandifolia

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs,
text and artwork: © Landscapes of Place
v2 / 12 November 2020



